

THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART

MAY SHOW QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear

We are trying to build a biographical record of Cleveland Artists for reference. May we enlist your assistance with the following data?

FULL NAME: ROBERT H. LAESSIG MEDIA:

DATE AND PLACE OF BIRTH: NEW JERSEY  
11/15/13

ART TRAINING - Schools, Scholarships, etc;

TEXTILE DESIGN SCHOOL, PLAUGH, GERMANY  
ART STUDENTS LEAGUE, NEW YORK

EXHIBITIONS IN WHICH YOUR WORK HAS BEEN SHOWN:

CLEVELAND MAY SHOW  
AKRON MAY SHOW  
MASSILON, OHIO  
NATIONAL ACADEMY ANN. SHOW  
AWS ANNUAL SHOW  
WATERCOLOR USA.

CHAUTAUQUA ANN. SHOW  
MAINSTREAMS, MARIETTA, OHIO  
WICHITA CENTENNIAL, KANSAS  
CANTON OHIO INSTITUTE  
DENVER, COLORADO

COLLECTIONS WHICH NOW INCLUDE YOUR WORK:

CLEVELAND MUSEUM  
NORFOLK MUSEUM, VA.  
SPRINGFIELD, MASS MUSEUM.  
ANDOVER, MASS.

MRS L.B. JOHNSON  
SILVER MINE, CONN.

AWARDS:

MAINSTREAMS, 1971  
ALLIED ARTISTS, 1971  
NAT'L ACADEMY  
CHAUTAUQUA (4 TOP PRIZES)  
WATERCOLOR USA  
WICHITA CENTENNIAL, 1970

AUDUBON ARTISTS, 1971  
PEN. W.C. SHOW, PHILA.  
MEAD, CORP. CHICAGO

PRESENT POSITION:

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We would greatly appreciate it if you would inform us of subsequent awards, purchases, exhibitions and scholarships. Thank you for your cooperation.

L. L. Schuler  
Director of the May Show



THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Mr. Laessig

We are trying to build a biographical record of Cleveland Artists for reference. May we enlist your assistance with the following data?

FULL NAME: ROBERT H. LAESSIG MEDIA: W.C.

DATE AND PLACE OF BIRTH: 11/15/13, WEST NEW YORK, N.J.

ART TRAINING - Schools, Scholarships, etc:

TEXTILE DESIGN SCHOOL, PLAUE, GERMANY  
ART STUDENTS LEAGUE, NEW YORK CITY

EXHIBITIONS IN WHICH YOUR WORK HAS BEEN SHOWN:

ANNUAL SHOWS, AKRON, OHIO; MASSILLON, OHIO; CLEVELAND, OHIO;  
BUTLER, YOUNGSTOWN, OHIO; DENVER, COLO; SPRINGFIELD, MISSOURI;  
AWS, NEW YORK CITY; MEAD SHOW, CHICAGO; CHATAUGUA, N.Y.;  
PALM BEACH, FLA.; PHILADELPHIA WATERCOLOR, PA.;

COLLECTIONS WHICH NOW INCLUDE YOUR WORK:

CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART  
AKRON " " "  
AMERICAN WATERCOLOR SOCIETY  
NAT'L ACADEMY OF DESIGN

AWARDS:

1959, CLEVELAND.

AKRON (2 in 1964)

BUTLER, YOUNGSTOWN.

A.W.S (2 in 1962, 1 in 1964)

PRESENT POSITION:

CHATAUGUA, N.Y. (1 in 1963, 1 in '63)

KNICKERBOCKER ARTISTS, NYC

PHILA W.C SOCIETY

WATERCOLOR USA, SPRINGFIELD, MO. (1 in 1963, 1 in 1964)

MEAD SHOW, CHICAGO.

AT WATER KENT, PALM BEACH, FLA.

ART CONSULTANT, AMERICAN GREETINGS

MEMBER: AWS, NAT'L PAINTERS IN CASEIN, ANA NAT'L ACADEMY OF DESIGN.

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*Ann Tzetschler Seire*  
Assistant Curator of Paintings

S.



THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART  
QUESTIONNAIRE

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FULL NAME: ROBERT H. LAESSIG

DATE AND PLACE OF BIRTH: NOV. 15 1913

ART TRAINING - Schools, Scholarships, etc:

FLORAL ART SCHOOL  
PLAUE, GERMANY

EXHIBITIONS IN WHICH YOUR WORK HAS BEEN SHOWN:

BUTLER MASSILLON, AKRON, MAY. SPRINGFIELD MASS.

MEDIA:

WATER COLOR  
CASEIN

COLLECTIONS WHICH NOW INCLUDE YOUR WORK:

CLEVELAND MUSEUM, ART INSTITUTE N.Y.

BUTLER BEST FLORAL OF SHOW (1957)

MASSILLON FIRST PRIZE WATER COLOR (1958)

AWARDS:

AKRON (3 special awards) (1958)

CLEVELAND FIRST PRIZE W.C. (1959)

" SPECIAL AWARD (1959)

PRESENT POSITION:

ART CONSULTANT  
AMERICAN GREETINGS CORP.

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Ann T. Zambelli  
Assistant in Paintings



PLAIN DEMER SUNDAY

# ay Magazine

y Gravure

OCT. 11, 1964

Allan Arthur, Associate

## Cover

TODAY'S cover watercolor by Robert Laessig might have been painted right out of your October garden. The "A.W.S." after his signature stands for American Watercolor



Society, in whose exhibits he has won awards.

This is the seventh cover Mr. Laessig has done for Sunday Magazine. For a story by Helen Borsick about the artist and his excursion into the field of abstraction under a pseudonym, turn to pages 5-6.



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"YELLOW ROSES"

by Robert Laessig



... a "native son," whose work reveals a personal feeling and an intimate knowledge of his subject  
... winner of numerous art awards, including the May Show ... an extensive selection of his original works may now be seen ... Painting showed, \$195.00 framed.

J. GEORGE MAYER GALLERY

20309 Van Aken Shopping Center

SK 2-4554

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Three Laessigs and their creator—"typical" floral at right, misty semi-realism, above, and abstraction in a new wax-treated cloth technique.

Photo by William A. Wynne

# Posy Painter's Secret Life

By HELEN BORSICK

BRIAN HAWKINS was a phenomenal artist, though no one had ever heard of him before last June 28 when he arrived on the art scene with an exhibition of his abstract paintings at Akron Institute of Art. The show went very well—nice attendance, lots of comment and speculation, a good critical review. When it was over, Hawkins, whom no one once actually saw during the whole time anyway, disappeared.

One of the few persons who knew that Hawkins the abstractionist painter

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PLAIN DEALER SUNDAY MAGAZINE, Oct. 11, 1964



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DOWNTOWN AND ALL 4 BRANCHES  
6 THE PLAIN DEALER SUNDAY MAGAZINE

## Posy Painter's Secret Life

CONTINUED

in reality was Cleveland flower painter Robert Laessig leading a double life in art, was Leroy Flint, Akron Institute director.

Flint had seen Laessig's abstractions in his studio and suggested an exhibition of this work.

Laessig was doubtful. He said no, thank you, I would like to, but . . . He had been working on these experimental things privately; his public image as an artist runs to flowers.

Laessig has been painting flowers for American Greetings Corp. greeting cards for nearly 16 years. He has had flower paintings in the last 15 May Shows and has won numerous local and national prizes for them. The latest (dateline Sept. 23, 1964) is a major purchase award in a national watercolor show in Knoxville, Tenn. (There may be another by now. Lately it seems that every time the art desk here turns around, Laessig has won another award.)

He prefers watercolor to other media and is a member of the American Watercolor Society, a distinction noted in the placing of the letters AWS after the signatures on his paintings.

Three of Laessig's flower paintings are in the collections of the Cleveland Museum of Art. A number of them have appeared on the cover of The Plain Dealer Sunday Magazine—including today's. In December 1962 Laessig was the featured guest artist in "American Artist." The story was titled "Robert Laessig Explains His Love of Flowers."

The idea of Laessig showing his new non-objective paintings under a fictitious name to avoid confusing, or disappointing, the public was Flint's. Not one to encourage deception but definitely a man to encourage the exhibition of what he considers good art. Flint said, "Why not show them under another name? Authors do it. Why can't you?"

Why not? If John Canaday the art critic (New York Times) can write detective stories under the pseudonym Matthew Head, then Robert Laessig the flower painter can paint abstractions under the name of Brian Hawkins.

And so he did. He lives, incidentally, on Hawkins Road in West Richfield, which is where the "Hawkins" came from. He subsequently decided to face up to the image breaking himself, which



Laessig's casein "Floral Beauty" won a special water color award in the 1959 May Show.

is why Hawkins went out of existence with the closing of the show.

**H**AWKINS never really solved any problems anyway. The problems were Laessig's—the problems of any artist in painting flowers, figure or abstraction, it doesn't matter which. They are the problems of painting greeting cards so that they don't look like the same old greeting cards, the problem of painting flowers or woods in such a way as to leave to the imagination what no brush can do better than nature has done herself; the problem of painting an abstraction that creates a unity and meaning of its own.

Laessig has not given up painting flowers. He once said that an artist never should stay away from nature too long.

But nature is only the beginning. "I refuse to copy a picture," Laessig said. (He meant refuse to exactly imitate the object as seen.) "Anyone can do that. I have to put in something of myself. There has to be a mystery to it, you see."

Mystery is a word that slips into his talk about what he asks of art, his or anyone else's. That and quality and refinement. Beauty, of course.

He studied for five years at the Textile Design Institute in Plauen, Germany, and later at the Art Students League in New York, and during World War II served as combat artist for the U.S. Air Force. He has learned and practiced his metier too well to abandon it for gingerbread houses, and too well, too, not to know the infinite possibilities to which one's inventive mind can lead one's art.